

**CITY OF COLUMBUS  
LAND REDEVELOPMENT OFFICE  
MOW TO OWN AND IMPROVE TO OWN PROGRAMS**

The Mow and Improve to Own Programs are designed to help adjacent property owners acquire City Land Bank vacant lots for less money and improve neighborhoods at the same time. Buyers commit to maintaining the vacant lot and improving the property with landscaping, fencings, tree removal, grass restoration, and other improvements. The cost of maintenance and improvement is subtracted from the purchase price.

As required by Ohio Revised Code §5722.07, the vacant lots owned by the City of Columbus Land Bank will be sold at not less than fair market value. Adjacent property owners may purchase eligible lot by contributing the in-kind cost of maintenance and lot improvement toward the purchase price. Priority will be given to owner occupants of adjacent property that share a property line.

New for September 2014: The City Land Bank Program has changed the program as follows:

**Mow to Own Program**

Eligible Participates:	Adjacent owner-occupants or 501(3) (c) non-profit organizations that own property next door (share a property line)
Eligible Work:	Maintaining the lot with or without additional improvements
Cost Reduction:	Up to 100% of the price of the lot, with an additional \$175 processing fee. The fee is waived if the buyer pays 50% or more in cash. Lawn mowing: \$25.00 per cut, maximum reimbursement of \$375.00 per year Leaf removal: \$25.00 per removal, maximum of \$75.00 per year Snow removal: \$25.00 per snow removal on front sidewalk Improvements: Cost agreed upon in Improvement Plan
Time to Complete Work:	Five years

Adjacent owners can maintain the lot as their side yard and count the maintenance and improvements made toward the acquisition cost. Unlike the Improve to Own Program, the homeowner has the option of making improvements and can choose to only maintain the property. Basic maintenance includes mowing and trimming the lot once every two weeks, raking leaves, shoveling snow, and picking up trash. Only homeowners that live next door (share a property line) may participate.

### **Improve to Own Program**

Eligible Participates:	Any applicant eligible for side yard and vacant lot purchase (including property owners within 400 feet and area non-profit organizations)
Eligible Work:	An improvement plan is required, both the cost of maintenance and improvements are counted toward the purchase. The proposed improvements must equal at least 50% of the purchase price.
Cost Reduction:	50% of the price of the lot Lawn mowing: \$25.00 per cut, maximum reimbursement of \$375.00 per year Leaf removal: \$25.00 per removal, maximum of \$75.00 per year Snow removal: \$25.00 per snow removal on front sidewalk Improvements: Cost agreed upon in Improvement Plan
Time to Complete Work:	One year

Anyone eligible to purchase a land bank parcel is eligible to participate in this program, including property owners within 400 feet and non-profit organizations. Participates must submit an improvement plan, listing the amount and locations of improvements to the property. Examples include fences, grass restoration, landscaping beds, trees, sidewalks and paths, gardens, and similar improvements that benefit the neighborhood. Construction of buildings or parking lots is not eligible and applicants for these projects must submit the application for new construction.

An application is required to participate in both programs. Once the application is approved, the City and buyer will enter into an agreement that specifies the purchase price, proposed improvements, and improvement plan. The property is transferred to the buyer once enough credits are earned toward the purchase price, either by completing and paying for the agreed upon improvements or cash payment. Additionally, the deed for the vacant lot acquired through the Mow and Improve to Own programs will contain deed restrictions, including, but not limited to a restriction that the acquired vacant lot may not be resold without written approval from the City of Columbus Land Redevelopment Office for a period of five years from the closing date.

Buyers must meet the following qualifications:

- *Responsibilities of all purchasers of vacant lots through both the Mow to Own and Improve to Own Program*
  - Submit the Application for Yard Expansion and Vacant Lot Purchase and application
  - Pay a nonrefundable administrative fee of \$175. This fee will be waived if the purchaser contributes at least 50% of the fair market value in cash and/or improvements to the lot.
  - Complete all proposed maintenance and/or improvements on the vacant lot to be acquired, including required maintenance sufficient to satisfy the fair market value purchase price
  - No delinquent real estate or personal property taxes in Franklin County
  - No history of property maintenance, nuisance, building, and/or zoning code violations
  - No delinquent utility accounts
  - Nonprofit Neighborhood Organizations must have 501(c)(3) status at the time of application and maintain it throughout the agreement
- *Adjacent Homeowners and Adjacent Nonprofit Neighborhood Organizations Participating in the Mow to Own Program*
  - Own and occupy the property adjacent to the land bank vacant lot to be acquired
- *Improve to Own Participants*
  - Meet the eligibility requirements contained in the Application for Yard Expansion and Vacant Lot Purchase
  - Submit an Improvement Plan

Process

- *Select a vacant residential lot from the for sale list.*
  - Only lots listed for sale with a price are eligible, applications for lots not listed for sale will be returned
  - Non-residential properties and properties along some commercial corridors are not eligible for the programs
  - The City has the absolute right to exclude properties from the program.
- *Price*
  - O.R.C. 5722.07 requires that the City of Columbus Land Bank Program sell the vacant lots for not less than fair market value. The sales price will be based on an internal fair market value determination by the Land Bank Program. However, the potential purchasers have the option to hire an independent appraiser to value the vacant lot or use the land value listed by the Franklin County Auditor.

- *Administrative Approval Process*
  - Purchaser must submit a completed application. Along with the application, purchasers will have the option to submit a proposal to earn all or any portion of the final purchase price by maintenance and/or improvements on the vacant lot.
    - Maintenance shall include, but not be limited to, mowing and removal of trash and debris on the vacant lot. Purchasers will receive a \$25.00 credit for each mowing and related maintenance occurrence, up to a maximum of 15 times per year.
    - Improvements shall include, but not be limited to, gardening, landscaping, fencing, etc. Credit given for improvements will not exceed 50% of the fair market value. Purchasers will be required to submit receipts and photographs of any improvements.
  - Purchasers will have the option to pay all or part of the purchase price for the vacant lot at any time during the agreement.
  - The application and submitted proposal will be reviewed by the Land Bank staff. As required, the Land Bank staff may request additional information from the applicant and negotiate the terms of the purchase, including the maintenance and improvements proposal cost and timeline.
  - Applicant will receive a notification letter with their approval or disapproval status.
  - If approved, the applicant must sign a Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) to purchase the vacant lot. The MOU will become null and void if the purchaser fails to adequately perform the proposed maintenance and/or improvements to the vacant lot.
- *Legislative Approval*
  - After the application has been approved, the Land Bank staff prepares the required communication and legislation for City Council approval.
- *Closing*
  - After the purchase price of the vacant lot has been earned or paid in accordance with an executed MOU between the purchaser and the City of Columbus Land Bank Program, the Land Bank staff will prepare the necessary documents and schedule the closing to effect the transfer of the vacant lot
  - A deed will be prepared for transfer of the property
  - The City will not provide title insurance to the purchaser. The purchaser may independently purchase title insurance through a title company

**Mow to Own Addendum**

**Include this sheet with your completed Application for Yard Expansion or Vacant Lot Purchase.**

**About the property you wish to purchase:**

Parcel ID Number:
Address:
Purchase Price of the Property:

**Please list the proposed improvements and a timeline for the work:**

<u>Proposed Improvement</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>

**Please attach a site plan, estimates, pictures or any other relevant information that will assist us in evaluating your application.**

**Signature (Required)**

I hereby authorize the Land Redevelopment Office of the City of Columbus to obtain any credit, criminal, or other information necessary to

- 1) Determine my ability, or the ability of the party that I represent, to complete the proposed project.
- 2) Verify the information supplied in this application. All the information that I have provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

X\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_